

News Release

Northwest School of Agriculture Alumni Named Top Aggies during 2013 Reunion

By Itollefs on Friday, July 19, 2013



Alumni from the Northwest School of Agriculture (NWSA) came back for their annual reunion

on Saturday, June 29, 2013, at the University of Minnesota Crookston. Recipients of the Top Aggie award were honored at the reunion during a noon luncheon held in Bede Ballroom, Sargeant Student Center. The award recognizes outstanding achievement by alumni over a lifetime, and is the highest award given by the Northwest School of Agriculture Alumni Association.

The Top Aggies for 2013 are Lowell Hamrick '53, Warren, Minn.; Beulah (Stolaas) Vad '58, Oklee, Minn.; and Willie Huot '63, Grand Forks, N.D.

Lowell Hamrick '53 learned to live away from home and take on responsibilities when he started at the Northwest School even though he was only thirteen years old. He would run a Grade A dairy barn and milk 75-80 Holstein cows. He was a member of the Pennington County Dairy Herd Improvement Association and spent several years as its president.

He has held a number of offices as part of the Melo Lutheran Church where he has been a lifelong member. He is currently serving as president of the Church's Cemetery Board Association, and he has cared for the Melo Lutheran Cemetery for 45 years.

Hamrick served on the Angus Elevator Board and has been a member of the Northwest School of Agriculture Alumni Association Board for six years. For twenty-three years he has been a director for the Vineland Huntsville Mutual Insurance Company of Climax, Minn., and was president of the board of directors for nine years.

Beulah (Stolaas) Vad '58 was active in many activities when she attended the Northwest School from girl's glee club to leadership camp. She has worked as a ceramics teacher for twenty years and as a professional seamstress for twelve years. Her skills as a seamstress she can trace back to learning sewing under the great teachers at the NWSA.

Vad served as state fire warden for fifteen years and has been on the Thrivent Financial Board for ten. She has also been an active member of the Northwest School of Agriculture Alumni Association Board and assisted with reunions and other board activities.

As a housewife and mother, Vad has been a teacher for both Sunday school and vacation bible school along with a Brownie leader for community girls. She has volunteered her skills to make quilts and assemble medical kits for flood victims and Lutheran World Relief. Vad and her husband, Lester '54, opened their home to host two foreign exchange students from Brazil.

Willie Huot '63 remembers his high school years as some of the best years of his life. It broadened his knowledge in agriculture, increased his social skills, created lifelong friendships, and gave him the confidence he needed to pursue a career path he didn't think possible earlier in his life.

Completing a course in welding after he graduated from the Northwest School and working at a steel fabrication plant in Red Wing, Minn., allowed Huot to save enough money to go to college in 1967. After he completed his bachelor of science in forestry from the University of Minnesota, he spent 2 ½ years in the Peace Corps working in Morocco leading an effort to design a system of forest inventory in the Atlas Mountains.

When he returned, Huot completed a master's degree in education and accepted a position in Ely, Minn., working at Vermillion Community College. From 1977-1990, he worked with the Montana State Extension Service, and then, accepted a similar position in Devils Lake, N.D. After two years in Devils Lake, he went to work as county agent in Grand Forks County where he continues to work.

Active in Lion's Club, he received the Melvin Jones Fellow Award from the Grand Forks Lion's Club this past year. He is also active in his church, and has been a member of the Grand Forks Chamber of Commerce Agri Business Committee for 21 years. In his professional life, he is part of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents and served as president of the North Dakota Association in 2005. Since 2011, Huot has been the national chairperson for the NACAA Agricultural Economics Professional Improvement Committee.

Background

The NWSA alumni reunion, first held in 1918, brings back alumni from the Northwest School of Agriculture, a residential high school located on what is now the University of Minnesota, Crookston campus. The NWSA opened its doors in 1906 and graduated its first class of 8 students in 1909. The campus educated students for 60 years, and during its last two years of operation, the campus transitioned to a two-year technical college, known as the University of Minnesota Crookston Technical Institute. In 1993, the campus transitioned again to offer baccalaureate degrees and became the first-ever laptop university in the nation.

Today the University of Minnesota Crookston delivers 28 bachelor's degree programs, 20 minors, and 39 concentrations on campus--as well as 11 degrees online--in the areas of agriculture and natural resources; business; liberal arts and education; and math, science and technology. With an enrollment of 1,800 undergraduates from 25 countries and 40 states, the Crookston campus offers a supportive, close-knit atmosphere that leads to a prestigious University of Minnesota degree. "Small Campus. Big Degree." To learn more, visit www.umcrookston.edu.

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